

Encountering Jesus through Scripture:
The 30 Day Prayer Challenge



Read • Reflect • Respond • Receive

2020 has been one of the most difficult years in our lifetime.

Do you want to do the one thing that absolutely will make 2021 better than 2020?

Can you take the challenge to know Jesus better and pray 15 minutes a day, 30 days straight?

Lectio Divina, or sacred reading, is an ancient and universal practice of reading and meditating on sacred writing. Since scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, a living text “breathing with God,” it makes sense that we will encounter Jesus Christ through letting his life speak to us through the Gospel of Luke. We are making time to let God speak to us and to listen. Let’s make a few decisions right now:

- When will you pray for 15 minutes? _____
- Where will you pray? _____
- Who will you ask to “check in” on whether you are doing this? (This can be a mutual check in.) _____
- What will you do when the day gets away from you?

The following is the *Lectio* process. It is meant to be a guide, not a rigid format. If you are not familiar with this way of prayer, it becomes easier after the first few days. We’re aiming for 30 days straight to get into the habit. Besides--this simple prayer can genuinely change your 2021, and awaken your relationship with Jesus Christ! Join us across southern Minnesota and let’s begin!

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The *Lectio* process:

Begin your prayer time by mentally putting aside distractions, and turning *off* your cell phone. Breathe slowly and settle into a minute of silence.

Pray to the Holy Spirit: “Holy Spirit, I know you are *here*. I give you permission to act in my life. Help me to encounter the living Jesus Christ.”

Find the passage of the day, and

- **Read.** Slowly. Read again. Is there a word or phrase that catches your attention? Linger there. Write it down in the booklet. Consider reading the passage aloud to yourself.
- **Reflect.** If something caught your attention, look at that a little longer. Was that unsettling? comforting? surprising? interesting? if a word or phrase did not catch your attention, focus on Jesus and his words. Imagine the scene as clearly as you can. Go back and re-read if that is helpful.
- **Respond.** This is where you speak to Jesus. Talk to him about what seems to be stirring in your heart. You may want clarity, but you want to praise, repent, or simply talk. This is your time with the Lord.
- **Receive.** What does the Lord want to give you today? Rest in his presence? Peace around a concern of yours? Light around a life decision? You may not know what the Lord is giving you, but practice waiting in trust for his presence and word. “Here am I, Lord, your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:10)

Conclude with familiar prayer (an Our Father or Glory Be) or your own words to God.

Consider writing something down in the booklet for each day after your prayer--it can be as short as a word, but you may be surprised to see a pattern emerge. Some people like to compose a one sentence prayer to close their *lectio* time (for example, “Lord, help me to trust like the child.” or “Jesus, thank you for being present to me today,” etc.)

Encountering Jesus through the Gospel of Luke

Journal challenge, Week 1: Treasuring Jesus in your heart

We're all called to live like Mary. But how? One of the simplest and most rewarding ways is to do what she did in Luke 2:19 (“... Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”) That is, she paid close attention to the wonder of God the Incarnate Son, right before her eyes! You are like Mary right now, spending time with the Word of God, you treasuring and pondering the Lord through this sacred reading. How incredible--we have access to the Messiah and Lord of the Universe through scripture and prayer! Now consider: where else do you see Jesus? In the Eucharist? in Adoration? do you sense him in sacred song? or his image in another person? Take some time to treasure one of these ways Jesus makes himself known to you, and like Mary, ponder that in your heart. Consider noting those insights here.

***Lectio Divina* prompts, Week 1—Jesus' Early Life**

Day 1: Luke 1:26-35

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 2: Luke 1:36-45

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 3: Luke 1:46-56

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 4: Luke 2:1-20

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 5: Luke 3:15-23

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 6: Luke 4:1-15

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 7: Luke 5:1-11

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

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Journal challenge, Week 2: Being the “hands and feet of Jesus” to our neighbor

Our Lord is amazing. He is always looking for ways to use our gifts for the good of others. God in his providence crosses our path and the path of someone who needs that gift we have to share – love, compassion, listening, prayer, etc. Catholic convert, Steve Ray, calls these moments “divine appointments.” We often go through our days without recognizing these appointments. But at the same time, St. Teresa of Avila is credited with saying “Christ has no hands, no feet on earth but yours.” This week, your goal is to be aware of the divine appointments God puts in your life. At the end of each day this week, ask yourself “Who did God send my way today and how did I respond?” Were you able to be reflect the love of Jesus Christ to them? Note these insights below. Think of one way to become more open to responding to these quiet “divine appointments.”

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Week 2—Jesus' Ministry

Day 8: Luke 6:12-26

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 9: Luke 6:27-38

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 10: Luke 6:43-49

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 11: Luke 7:36-50

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 12: Luke 8:4-15

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 13: Luke 8:22-25

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 14: Luke 9:18-27

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

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Journal Challenge, Week 3: The joy of Jesus' message

One way to become closer to the Lord is to put into words why your faith is important to you. If you haven't ever put it into words, it is hard to be ready to share with someone else. Think about your answer to one or more of these questions:

“Why am I Catholic?”

“Why does Jesus matter to me?”

“Why is my faith central to my life?”

Write down your answer and practice saying it out loud. This will make it easier to share with someone else (it's good to keep your answer to 2-3 minutes). We can help to bring others closer to God, by being able to simply and naturally talk about why our faith is important to us. This week, answer one or more of these questions below and look for an opportunity to share with someone you meet. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “Joy is the net by which we catch souls”.

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Week 3: Jesus on the Road to Jerusalem

Day 15: Luke 9:51-62

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 16: Luke 10:38-42

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 17: Luke 11:1-13

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 18: Luke 11:37-44

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 19: Luke 12:22-31

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 20: Luke 15:1-2; 11-26

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 21: Luke 18:1-8

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

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Journal challenge, Week 4: Carrying the cross

There is no sugarcoating carrying the cross. It was painful and completely undeserved. Yet Jesus bore that cross and died on it for us, and for our salvation. All of us are called to carry a cross at some point in our lives, and the difficulties of 2020 will provide fresh memory of crosses to bear. The cross is not deserved. It may well be painful. But take some time this week and consider: if you are carrying a cross now, has another Simon of Cyrene in your life helped you bear the cross? Has Mary tried to give you comfort? Does reflecting upon Jesus' suffering help you offer your own suffering to him, as one who understands and can take it with you? Reflect on this below.

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Week 4: Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Day 22: Luke 22:14-23

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 23: Luke 22:39-46

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 24: Luke 22:54-62

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 25: Luke 23:13-25

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 26: Luke 23:32-43

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 27: Luke 23:44-56

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 28: Luke 24:1-12

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

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Day 29: Luke 24:13-35

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Day 30: Luke 24:36-53

I heard the word(s):

My prayer:

Amen!

You did it!

We did it!

How has this experience been for you?

Consider keeping your prayer check-in partner, and doing this every day with the daily gospel reading. It is available at <https://bible.usccb.org/daily-bible-reading> . You can challenge a family member or friend to do the 30 day prayer challenge as well: this booklet is available for download at www.dowr.org/missionary-discipleship/resources.html .

We cannot promise an easy life or freedom from hardship. We *can* rest in God's promise that he is with us and gives us strength, peace, and even joy in our struggles. He is the source of a better 2021. Keep praying!

Scripture selections from FOCUS Ministries 30 Day Prayer Dare, <https://focusoncampus.org/content/30-day-prayer-dare> . Lectio Divina description inspired by Evangelical Catholic. Text written by Susan Windley-Daoust and Deb McManimon.